

n. 25). Methodologically, some may find that he has inverted the process of arriving at his conclusions, working with a preferred definition rather than extracting it from the wisdom texts before making his global application.

Inversion and topsy-turvy are, of course, Perry's stock in trade: his King Saul must be more important than has usually been granted; his Pharaoh's worries about Israel (Exod 1:10) are not primarily in military terms but rather in agricultural and productive ones (49); his proverbs are not timeless wisdom (90)—though one wonders now if they must then be timeless trivia or folly, for they are surely timeless; his Qoh 12 is neither allegory nor altogether literal; and his Tamar becomes the crowning simile of righteousness: Ps 92:12 should be translated "The righteous shall flourish like Tamar," *tamar* being both the proper name and the term for "palm tree." Enthusiasm for Tamar seems to specifically name her as more righteous than even Noah. This last may either be inadvertent or intentional. Only our text can tell, whose table of contents lists "Noah the Tsaddik," followed immediately by "Tamar the Greater Tsaddik." Tamar is, of course, by Judah's admission, more righteous than he (Gen 38:26). But Perry's definitions may allow incest and that which Habakkuk curses to be deemed "righteous" even if only "in a compromised way" (39), because Lot's daughters succeed in preserving seed by intoxicating their father (see Hab 2:15). Clearly much compromise is involved in Perry's radical definitions.

Characterization of Saul as modest, not knowing power, having no taste for it, loving his enemy David, is equally dubious (89), given the conceit and disobedience of 1 Sam 15, the slaughter of priests in 1 Sam 22, the arrogant insensitivity of 1 Sam 14:24-45, and the ruthless attacks on and pursuit of David (1 Sam 18:6-19:24). Nor is Saul's story in any way a narrative of "rags to riches." Saul's deferential attitude before Samuel and the crowd assembled to choose a king should not be confused with notions of poverty. Saul was not poor (1 Sam 9:1-3).

In the end, though, because he is both learned and independent, Perry's work provides a noteworthy example of constant dialogue with the biblical text, the sources of Jewish tradition, and the world of contributors to biblical scholarship. He is neither merely reflecting the views of others, nor repeating well-known traditions. Neither is he necessarily affirming established scholarly consensus. Those who find it fascinating to follow a brilliant mind at work will experience a great thrill even if they stumble a bit in Perry's twilight zone.

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Schneider, Tammi J. *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008. 240 pp. Paper, \$21.99.

Most of the women in the book of Genesis are known by stigmatizing labels: Sarah as mean in regard to Hagar; Potiphar's wife being marked as a liar. But are these legitimate representations?

Tammi Schneider's purpose is to show that "women's roles in the narrative are more than just footnotes to the men" (10). Schneider, who is Professor

of Religion at Claremont Graduate University, asserts that women are just as important in the fulfillment of the divine promises as men (*Sarah: Mother of Nations* [New York: Continuum, 2004]). Women furthermore are markers of the status of society (*Judges* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000]). Schneider indeed esteems the role of women highly, as seen in her thesis for *Mothers of Promise*. “The data reveal that *women* in Genesis *determine* who receives the promise from the Israelite Deity” (11, emphasis supplied). “Many details about the female characters shape the descriptions and actions of the male characters. In order to understand the role and function of the male characters, and of the Israelite Deity, we must pay attention to the fine details, role and function of the female characters” (13). And these details are what Schneider attempts to provide in this rather encyclopedic work on the women of Genesis.

The discussion of the female characters in *Mothers of Promise* is divided into four parts. The women treated in each category are all those who are the singular subject of at least one verb. Part 1 discusses the “Matriarchs”: Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel. Part 2 treats “Mothers of Potential Heirs (or Slaves, Concubines, Daughters, and Daughters-in-Law)”: Hagar, Esau’s Wives, Zilpah, Bilhah, Dinah, Mrs. Judah, Tamar, and Asenath. Part 3 includes “Mothers Who Predate the Promise”: Eve, Adah and Zillah, Milcah, Mrs. Lot, and Lot’s Daughters. Part 4 considers “Women Who Do Not Bear”: The Woman in the Garden, Deborah, and Mrs. Potiphar. Each part ends with a summary, and the overall conclusion asserts that “who the mother is controls the destiny of the children” (217).

Each woman in the book of Genesis receives a separate chapter, which begins with a systematic description of the female character and then uses a “verbing the character” approach to discuss each woman from two grammatical perspectives: as the subject of a verb or verbs, and as the object of either verbs or prepositional phrases. This is followed by an analysis of the woman’s specific relationships and a short conclusion. Thus the author gives a detailed but rather technical description of each woman.

All occurrences for each character are filtered out from the greater work of Genesis and brought together. This singular treatment of each woman brings into sharp focus her specific contribution to the whole narrative. Furthermore, although the discussion is rather technical, it does bring out a character description, based on all available data from the text that can bring new insights to the reader on who these women were and what they accomplished.

Since Schneider has done previous work on Sarah, the chapter dedicated to this matriarch is somewhat more extensive than the others. This chapter, more so than in the others, makes assumptions that do not appear to directly emerge from the text itself: “The reference to Pharaoh treating her as a wife implies that Abraham is not concerned about guarding sexual access to Sarah. Sarah cannot bear children, which is apparently the one thing her husband wants” (26). Although positive aspects are mentioned elsewhere, the somewhat negative tone toward the role of men in relationship to women is not limited to this example.

In order to let the role of the women play out more distinctly, the author has chosen not to use the modern name “God” in this work. Where the original Hebrew uses the Tetragrammaton YHWH, she uses “the Deity” or “the Israelite Deity.” Occurrences of *Elohim* are simply transliterated. By thus attempting to place God on an equal level with the other players in the narrative, she seeks to give the female characters greater independence of choice and action. The question, however, is to what extent the women themselves viewed their role as independent as Schneider describes, and also whether the text itself would allow for this.

The emphasis on the independence of women is characteristic of a feminist hermeneutic, which classically holds that what is said in the text concerning women needs to be expanded because of an assumed underreporting on women. Schneider claims, however, that with her verbing-the-character approach, close reading of the text itself, and bringing together of all the scattered textual data concerning a character, the classical feminist textual expansion is unnecessary because the text itself already supports the feminist position. But that conclusion is still a matter of interpretation of the available information that is gleaned from the text.

The contribution of *Mothers of Promise* is that it places the action and choices of women in the book of Genesis in perspective by giving a more synthesized view of each female character. Filtering out and bringing together all the relevant data concerning a specific woman brings to life the person behind the name and provides a deeper understanding of her experiences, character, and role in the text. Even though after reading the book one might not agree with Schneider's thesis, presuppositions, or conclusions, she has provided a useful resource for textual studies by gathering together the bits and pieces of information on female characters in the book of Genesis.

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Strong, Cynthia A., and Meg Page, eds. *A Worldview Approach to Ministry Among Muslim Women*. Pasadena: Wm. Carey Library, 2007. 354 pp. Paper, \$19.99.

Cynthia Strong is an Associate Professor of Missiology at Simpson University in Redding, California, who has served as a missionary in Korea and the Philippines. Meg Page has served among Muslims in Asia for seventeen years and continues to facilitate women's ministry to Muslims through encouragement, prayer mobilization, and leadership-training materials. There are seventeen contributors to this book.

*A Worldview Approach* is divided into four parts. The first part deals with foundational issues of Muslim cultures, providing anthropological tools useful to understand how a Muslim family is organized and functions and what role the values of shame and honor play in the Muslim worldview. It also provides the necessary theological background for understanding the following chapters. Jesus Christ is presented as the one to cleanse shame, to rescue women from the world of magic, and to heal their hearts' wounds and scars. His incarnational strategy is offered as a model for those who would